

## Psychiatrist and psychotherapist. An attempt to summarize work of Jerzy Witold Aleksandrowicz

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### Summary

17.10.2019 was the first anniversary of the death of an extraordinary psychiatrist, psychotherapist, researcher, teacher, wonderful man and friend – Jerzy W. Aleksandrowicz [1936-2018]. Professor Aleksandrowicz left not only a lot of unusual and touching memories being still alive in our hearts, but also remarkable achievements as a the result of decades of his unprecedented scientific and clinical work.

### Jerzy W. Aleksandrowicz, psychiatrist, psychotherapist, researcher

Jerzy Witold Aleksandrowicz (1936-2018) was born in Krakow and in Krakow he graduated from medicine and philosophy. He completed his postgraduate training in psychiatry at the Department of Psychiatry, Medical Academy Kraków. Actually his first position was that of clinical assistant in Regional Psychiatric Hospital in Jarosław. But, he soon joined the staff of the above mentioned academic Department of Psychiatry. At this institution Aleksandrowicz worked under direction of professors Eugeniusz Brzezicki, Karol Spett, Antoni Kępiński and Adam Szymusik [1,2]. All successive chairmen of psychiatry emphasized the importance of harmonious joining clinical work with research and teaching. Aleksandrowicz complied with this attitude and followed this rule through whole his professional life. He was industrious researcher eager to publish results of his studies. Completed his training in psychiatry he continued his career to get the scientific degrees of doctor of medicine, habilitated doctor of medical sciences,

and finally the scientific title of professor of medical sciences.

Meanwhile Jerzy Aleksandrowicz founded the day-care psychotherapeutic service for neurotic patients. The service quickly developed in separate Department of Psychotherapy and later, into the Chair of Psychotherapy. The Department had started undergraduate training in psychotherapy for students of medicine. The course of psychotherapy has been obligatory. Besides students have been offered elective courses e.g. in psychoanalysis.

Jerzy Aleksandrowicz also contributed significantly to the development and organization of postgraduate training in psychotherapy. He was chairman of training programs and supporter of the idea of strong connection of psychotherapy and medicine.

He was active member of professional and scientific organizations. In Polish Psychiatric Association (Polskie Towarzystwo Psychiatryczne – PTP), which granted him with the Honorary Membership, his most significant positions were these connected with the Association editorial activity, as discussed later. But he also served as President of Scientific Section of Psychotherapy, member of ethics commissions and member of the Association General Peer Court. Jerzy

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Aleksandrowicz was also active member of international associations such as European Association of Psychiatry, European Association of Psychotherapy (delegate of Poland), European Society of Hypnosis in Psychotherapy and Psychosomatic Medicine, International Association of Group Psychotherapy, Polish-French Psychiatric Association, Polish Israeli Association for Mental Health, World Association for Dynamic Psychiatry, Federation Europeenne de Psychoanalyse et Ecole Psychoanalytique de Strasbourg (International Correspondent).

Jerzy Witold Aleksandrowicz was born in assimilated Jewish family. His father Julian was recognized hematologist, professor at Medical Academy, Kraków. He was a hero of the World War II known as Doktor Twardy, soldier of the underground Home Army. Jerzy's mother, Maria was physiotherapist rehabilitating children suffering skeletal dysfunctions. The family was deported by Nazis to Kraków ghetto, but escaped annihilation. They managed to get out of the ghetto via sewer system (build before the war by Maria's brother). Julian Aleksandrowicz joined the Home Army, Maria and Jerzy survived in hiding. After the war Jerzy had completed his education. He married Beata Szymańska – philosopher and poetess.

### PSYCHIATRIST-PSYCHOTHERAPIST

Professionals of Jerzy Aleksandrowicz generation, living in East Europe, had scarce access to centers of training in psychotherapy. Kraków, where he was postgraduate student, was one of the few places of re-introduction of psychotherapy to mental health care. But still, choice of orientation resulted rather from availability of teacher than a consequence of careful assessment of strengths and weaknesses of particular orientation. Jerzy Aleksandrowicz, however, was well educated in theoretical background of the most important psychotherapeutic schools. As well as in psychotherapeutic skills. He was trained in analytical psychotherapy supervised by Lucien Israel at the University of Strasbourg. He was in training psychotherapy with Antoni Kępiński. He studied therapeutic skills based on learning theory at Stefan Leder. He learned psychotherapy based on group dynamics. He

participated in Carl Rogers workshop on client-centered psychotherapy. Himself had organized trainings in short term psychodynamic therapy elaborated by Peter Sifneos (run by Lars Weisæth), and in cognitive behavioral therapy run by Astrid Heiberg. The full list of trainings Jerzy Aleksandrowicz both organized and participated in is difficult to reconstruct.

Jerzy Aleksandrowicz described his psychotherapeutic approach as eclectic. Moreover he claimed necessity of eclecticism in psychotherapy: "...none of existing theories is extensive enough to enable understanding and treatment of neurotic disorders. Most of them are based on limited clinical experience. They are relevant in particular cases and useful only in these cases. (...) every theoretical approach and procedures related, therapeutic techniques developed may appear adequate in therapy of particular patients (...) But I feel that in this proposition of practicing psychotherapy a reference, a guiding principle ruling usage of elements various theories. That is psychopathology, individual diagnosis of disorders and their causal factors ... [3, p.10].

### PSYCHIATRIST-RESEARCHER

For almost seven decades Jerzy Aleksandrowicz had been an active researcher in the fields of psychiatry and psychotherapy. Methodology of psychiatric research reveals as crucial for him. With time, the most important goals of his studies had been finding adequate methods for measurement of treatment effectiveness.

The first project he participated as research team member was that developed by Antoni Kępiński on psycholytic (or psychodysleptic) effects of lysergic acid dimethylamide (LSD). The results of the study have been never published. Raw documentation of the project enables to reconstruct its goal and design. The study was stopped in 1961, before LSD was declared illicit drug. One can only guess the reason – researchers' disappointment concerning impact of experiencing experimental psychosis on understanding of patients suffering mental illnesses.

Aleksandrowicz got involved then in studying connections between mental states and specific physical functioning. In early sixties he pub-

lished on mental states (and mental disorders) and blood clotting [4-7], and on carbohydrates metabolism [8-11]. Results of the study on glucose metabolism in depressive states were basis of his doctoral dissertation. He had approached also a topic of endocrine functioning in rapid cycling affective disorder [12,13]. With the dawn of psychopharmacology era Aleksandrowicz joined the stream of clinical studies on newly developed compounds being introduced to treatment of mental disorders [14-26]. Majority of the publications in the first period of his development as a researcher was based on projects realized by teams, often multiprofessional.

An essay from 1969, on silence in psychotherapy, initiates the main body of Jerzy Aleksandrowicz's scientific publications [27]. Studies on psychotherapy had occupied him for half a century. The most important characteristic of his research is a creative care for consistency of clinical experience, scientific research and teaching. To keep this standard researcher has to cope with serious methodological difficulties. Contemporary medical science values objective view and parametric assessment of phenomena and processes studied. Medicine should be based on evidence. Any method of approach to deal with health disorders has to be proved as effective before recognition as suitable for treatment. The idea of evidence based medicine was not paradigmatic in the sixties yet.

Aleksandrowicz research efforts covered a group of mental disorders which at that time were called neuroses. The paradigmatic concept of neuroses at that time was their psychogenesis. Psychogenesis is a common factor in significantly varying theories: from psychoanalysis to behaviorism and cognitive theory.

Results of the research gave Jerzy Aleksandrowicz background for formulation of his own theory of neurotic disorders. He kept to the traditional model of illness. But rejected an idea of nosological distinction between various clinical manifestation of neurosis [28-32]. The results of empirical studies carried on in the seventies gave evidence on changes in neurosis symptoms in time [33]. These observations led him to the hypothesis on neurotic symptoms as a way of communication. Neurosis, according to this idea, is a specific disorder of interpersonal communication. Psychosocial factors, pointed out

Aleksandrowicz, play the main role in pathogenesis of neurosis. It was congruent with this idea to recognize psychotherapy as adequate treatment for people suffering neurosis. He emphasized that psychotherapy is the causal treatment for neurotics.

Aleksandrowicz was convinced, and declared his position consequently, that psychotherapeutic skills can be used in treatment of neurosis and other health disorders of psychosocial pathogenesis, but also in other circumstances and to achieve other goals. So, not every use of psychotherapeutic skill is therapy. He claimed psychotherapy to be separate from other forms of psychological helping, such as support in difficult life situations or in personal development [34-37].

Research on psychotherapy in the Department of Psychotherapy, Jagiellonian University Collegium Medicum, created and run by Aleksandrowicz, concerned not only the question of psychotherapy effectiveness in treatment of neuroses, but also identification of ways psychotherapy does work [38-52]. The studies on effectiveness of psychotherapeutic process require solving of the problem of assessment of change. As clinician, Aleksandrowicz decided to use descriptive psychopathology. Working with his team he developed a set of diagnostic tools enabling measurement of changes in the course of treatment: The Symptom Questionnaire "S" [53-56], The Symptom Questionnaire "O" [54-56] and Neurotic Personality Questionnaire (KON-2006) [57, 58].

Another area of Aleksandrowicz's studies was hypnosis. The essence of hypnosis is, according to him, a specific rapport between two persons. Concentration of hypnotized person on hypnotizing one is required for this kind of the rapport. Aleksandrowicz undermined the earlier concepts of hypnosis explaining hypnotic state as result of suggestion and hypnotized person's sensibility to it, as well as connecting hypnosis phenomena with hysteria or trans.

At the beginning of this age Aleksandrowicz came back to objective methods of studies, now on psychotherapy. Functional brain imaging opened possibility to identify if there are any changes in brain functioning influenced by interpersonal therapeutic interaction. He chose comparing brain functioning change being

a consequence of analgesic suggestion and those appearing in hypnotic state. Results strongly supported his concept of hypnosis being the attention concentration state [59-72].

### **TEACHER OF PSYCHOTHERAPY – SCHOOL OF PSYCHOTHERAPY.**

Professor Aleksandrowicz was actively engaged in educating and guiding young practitioners in the field of psychotherapy. He not only published papers and manuals on psychotherapy training, but also for many years was the Director of the Psychotherapy training lead first in the Department of Psychotherapy Jagiellonian University Medical College, and later also by the Medical Center of Postgraduate Education at the Jagiellonian University with the accreditation of Polish Psychiatric Association. He was a supervisor and a teacher for hundreds of future psychotherapists, his ideas connected with psychotherapy functioning he continued to described in manuals for students [73-79] and in further numerous publications [80-112].

### **OPEN MINDED TUTOR**

Jerzy Aleksandrowicz was an inspiration for young researchers not only in Krakow, but thorough the country and abroad. He was a promotor of 8 doctoral theses (Andrzej Zięba, Anna Potoczek, Jerzy Sobański, Gustaw Sikora, Agnieszka Klimowicz, Aneta Rewer, Artur Januś, Anna Citkowska), but he also supported PhD candidates and young scientists in their scientific achievements (especially Michał Mielimąka, Katarzyna Cyranka, Katarzyna Klasa) till the last days of his activity. His latest publications were concentrated inter alia on new challenges in psychiatry and psychotherapy [113-124]. The coronation of his research investigations was paper published already after his death, finalized by him two weeks before he deceased [125].

### **EDITOR**

Archives of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy has been founded by Jerzy Aleksandrowicz in 1999. However, The Archives was not the first profes-

sional journal he had founded. In 1970 Scientific Section for Psychotherapy of The Polish Psychiatric Association committed him to edit a journal concerned psychotherapy. For two years the journal appeared irregularly as *Zeszyty psychoterapeutyczne* to change its title in 1972 for *Psychoterapia* and be published as quarterly. Due to legal regulation and restrictions on publications at the time formal support from other institutions was necessary to get permission for PTP to edit *Psychoterapia*. At the beginning Polfa (a state pharmaceutical enterprise) played the role of co-editing organization. Later on Te Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology, and now The Jagiellonian University Collegium Medicum, both recognized scientific institutions, subsequently replaced the co-editor position.

Till 1990 *Psychoterapia* was the only in Eastern Europe scientific journal dedicated to problems of psychotherapy. Professionals from this part of the continent, cut off from the West by iron curtain, could publish their work in it. To make *Psychoterapia* accessible for all interested, Aleksandrowicz had decided to publish texts, besides of Polish, in English, French. German and Russian. Jerzy Aleksandrowicz had been *Psychoterapia* Editor in Chief for eighteen years (1970-1989).

In 1992 Jerzy Aleksandrowicz was elected by the Polish Psychiatric Association General Assembly as Editor in Chief of the main official Association journal *Psychiatria Polska*. He kept this position, re-elected, till 2014. The journal is printed bimonthly. For several years Aleksandrowicz launched in *Psychiatria Polska* section containing translated abstracts, which compiled contents for recent and most important scientific psychiatric journals i.e. *British Journal of Psychiatry* and *American Journal of Psychiatry* — a service that alert Polish researchers and clinicians to new relevant publications. *Psychiatria Polska* become the first Polish psychiatric periodic indexed in PubMed/Medline, a National Library of Medicine database, and was subsequently admitted to Science Citation Index Expanded by Thomson Reuters. It allowed first Impact Factor calculation for *Psychiatria Polska*, announced by Journal Citation Report after another two years (in 2009). Also it worth noticing that *Psychoterapia* and *Archives of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy* are listed in Emerg-



ing Sources list of Clarivate, waiting to be admitted to JCR.

Since 1989, due to political transformation in Poland PTP had to create a new independent structure enabling publishing. The Association had decided to build up an organization named Komitet Redakcyjno-Wydawniczy (KRW-Editorial and Publishing Committee) and in 1994 appointed Jerzy Aleksandrowicz its president. Aleksandrowicz had organized this enterprise and run it for 25 years. The KRW has been publishing all the Association journals: *Psychiatria Polska*, *Psychoterapia*, *Archives of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy*, and internet – journal *Psychiatria i Psychoterapia* (founded in 2005). *Psychiatria i Psychoterapia* was the first Polish psychiatric e-periodic, that lasted over decade, helping more popular Polish psychiatric literature became accessible electronically via the Web. Besides it has been publishing professional books in series *Biblioteka Psychiatrii Polskiej*.

## ENTHUSIAST OF LIFE

Professor Aleksandrowicz celebrated life and enjoyed its various sides. He was sensitive to the beauty of nature, with special sentiment to cats. His fluency in French allowed him to explore French culture and literature, being fascinated with Paris. He loved to savor cigars and dry red wine. His passion was sailing – he also had appropriate diplomas in this field and captain's qualifications. Jerzy Aleksandrowicz's remarkable wit and interest in the complexity of human nature were manifested in variety in activities – from tracking the current political situation, through reading literature – as evidenced by his huge home library, rich in subject psychiatry literature, but also poetry or crime novels; and finally to constant interest in the affairs of people close to him. Just as he was deeply involved in work, he was also engaged in relationships, devoting his time, attention and care to anyone who needed his help. This attitude towards life has made his work authentic and still fruitful.

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